
REPORT OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON MINORITY VETERANS



Annual Report

2018

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Letter from the Advisory Committee Chair

Dear Secretary Wilkie:

I am grateful to serve as the Chairman of the Advisory Committee for Minority Veterans (ACMV). The enclosed 2018 Annual Report includes recommendations which reflect key issues identified by the Committee through briefings received at VA Central Office in December 2017 and a site visit to the Department of Veterans Affairs facilities in the St Louis, MO area in April 2018. While visiting the VA facilities in St Louis, MO we received feedback from the town hall meeting conducted at Harris Stowe University to gather issues and recommendations from our Veterans.

The committee members' background has been a tremendous asset to ensure the Committee provides you and the Congress the most enduring recommendations to ensure our minority Veterans received fair and equitable care and services from the Department of Veterans Affairs. I served in the U.S. Army for over 24 years and retired as a Command Sergeant Major (CSM) having served as a CSM at the Brigade-level. Other committee members are also Veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. The overall experience of our members has contributed significantly and have only provided recommendations needing change within the Department of the Veterans Affairs. Some of our members have gone beyond the scope of our Committee's time and have personally been involved in positively effecting Veterans' services and benefits in disaster areas and homeless programs. Our members are members who have their boots on the ground.

One of our recommendations is to address the concerns of honorably discharged deported minority Veterans. A 31-member Congressional Hispanic Caucus report said there are about 3000 cases of Veterans deported to countries around the world, though the U.S. Government does not track them. Our recommendation is to facilitate the travel and compensation and pension examinations for our deported honorably discharged Veterans.

The recently signed into law Mission Act is favorably received by this Committee. Veteran Service Organizations, which we interact with in our role as Committee members, are in alignment and support the new law. VSO's championed the expansion of the VA Caregiver Program which will now extend benefits to Veterans of all eras. Of course, extending the Choice Program through May 2019 while the department implements the new consolidated community care program is a major accomplishment which will benefit many minority Veterans.

The Committee commends the VHA for having selected a Director for the Office of Health Equity and we are encouraged by their commitment to fully staff that operation. We look forward to VHA fully staffing this office by the end of FY 2019. The Committee values this office to conduct research and following through on implementing effective strategies that will improve the quality of care provided to minority Veterans.

The Advisory Committee applauds the Department of Veterans Affairs Central Office for the tremendous progress you have made in improving services provided to our minority Veterans in a very short period. Recently, the NCA and VHA have agreed with one of our previously submitted major recommendations to provide race and ethnicity data which is mandated by the

OGC opinion of March 2007. We ask for your support to be explicit with the VBA leadership to include race and ethnicity data in their annual reports, specifically any reports regarding the utilization of benefits and the determination/denial of benefits and more specifically around compensation for service-connected disabilities. Once the VBA data is provided, we pledge to provide whatever caveats or disclaimers are necessary to ensure the information is interpreted and acted upon in its proper context. The consistent tracking of such data will ensure the Department's commitment to provide equitable and impartial services and programs to all Veterans.

The Committee commends the NCA for having already made changes to their VA Form 40-1330 (Claim for Standard Government Headstone and Marker). The VA Form added Block #5 for Race or Ethnicity Data. This will ensure NCA will be able to include this information in their annual reports.

The Committee thanks the VA for authorizing the Center for Minority Veterans to collaborate with VA partners to organize and host a National Minority Veterans Summit in 2019. In the history of VA, no such event has ever been held and seems extremely important given the changing demographics of the Veteran population. A National Minority Veterans Summit would provide the opportunity for minority Veterans to hear from the VA leadership while providing them a platform to vocalize what is important to them in serving their unique needs.

Of note, are the VA statistics which predict the minority Veterans' population to increase from 23.2 percent of the total Veteran population in 2017 to 32.8 percent in 2037. Hispanic Veterans will increase from 7.4 percent in 2017 to 11.2 percent in 2037. The Committee will remain vigilant in its duties to ensure the VA provides our minority Veterans the health care and benefits which minority Veterans are entitled.

Overall, the Committee is strongly encouraged by the Department's leadership to ensure the VA's ongoing progress to enhance access to VA services for all Veterans. I would also like to thank the VA leadership for the positive experience of meeting with all the Advisory Committee Chairs to encourage cross-collaboration. This committee remains hopeful this process and program is continued.

In closing, ACMV respectfully requests that future briefings from VA entities include specific race and ethnicity data and recommendations at the next ACMV meeting tentatively scheduled for December 2018 in Washington, DC. I extend the Committee's special thanks to the expert staff of the Center for Minority Veterans for their professionalism and continued outstanding support to the ACMV.

On behalf of the Committee, I express my sincere appreciation for allowing us the privilege to serve the VA and our Nation's Minority Veterans.

Respectfully,


Librado M. Rivas
Chairman

Part I. Executive Summary

The 2018 Annual Report of the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans (ACMV) provides the Committee's observations, recommendations, and rationales that address the effectiveness of the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) delivery of benefits and services to minority Veterans. The report also provides Departmental responses and action plans to address the 2018 ACMV Annual Report recommendations and a summary of the progress made on action plans from the 2012, 2016, and 2017 ACMV Reports.

ACMV fulfilled its requirement to conduct a minimum of two meetings this year in accordance with Public Law 103-446 and the VA Charter on the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans dated March 7, 2018. ACMV met on December 12-14, 2017, at VA Central Office (VACO) and conducted a site visit in St. Louis, Missouri, from April 17-19, 2018. The meeting at VACO included briefings from the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), National Cemetery Administration (NCA), and select VA Staff Offices. Ex-Officio members from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Department of Labor (DOL) provided briefings on their respective missions and services provided to minority Veterans at the VACO meeting. During the St. Louis site visit, ACMV received briefings and facility tours at the St. Louis Health Care System-John Cochran Division, St. Louis Regional Benefit Office, and Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery. On the afternoon of April 18, 2018, ACMV and representatives from the St. Louis Health Care System, St. Louis Regional Benefit Office, and Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery responded to questions from minority Veterans and provided updates on current VA initiatives during a town hall meeting conducted at the William L. Clay, Sr. Early Childhood Center, Harris-Stowe State University (HSSU) in St. Louis.

ACMV reviewed information received during meetings with VA officials, through document reviews, and from direct communications with minority Veterans. The Committee strongly believes that if implemented, the four 2018 recommendations will significantly enhance VA's ability to strategically address the needs of minority Veterans as the Veterans population become more diverse. These recommendations and rationales address the following issues:

- Develop comprehensive plans to provide access to health care services and benefits for all honorably-discharged, deported Veterans by June 2019.
- Require VBA to collaborate with the National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics to publish disability award reports bi-annually to identify and address potential racial/ethnic award disparities by the end of Fiscal Year (FY) 2019.
- VHA follows through on its commitment to provide the VHA Office of Health Equity (OHE) necessary personnel resources by the end of FY 2019 to facilitate implementation of the VA Health Equity Action Plan.
- VBA develops a comprehensive communication plan to encourage minority Veteran participation in the Rapid Appeals Management Process (RAMP) by 2nd Quarter, FY 2019.

Part II. Summary of 2018 Recommendations

Recommendation #1: That the Department of Veterans Affairs proactively develop comprehensive plans to provide access to health care services and benefits for all honorably discharged deported Veterans by June 2019.

Recommendation #2: That the Department of Veterans Affairs require the Veterans Benefits Administration to collaborate with the National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics to publish disability award reports bi-annually to identify and address potential racial/ethnic award disparities by the end of FY 2019.

Recommendation #3: That the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration, follows through on its commitment to provide the VHA Office of Health Equity (OHE) necessary personnel resources by the end of FY 2019, to facilitate implementation of the VA Health Equity Action Plan.

Recommendation #4: That the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, develop a comprehensive communication plan to encourage minority Veteran participation in the Rapid Appeals Management Process (RAMP) by 2nd Qtr., 2019.

Part III. ACMV 2018 Recommendations, Rationales, and VA Responses

Recommendation #1: That the Department of Veterans Affairs proactively develop comprehensive plans to provide access to health care services and benefits for all honorably discharged deported Veterans by June 2019.

Rationale: Based upon recent revisions to existing immigration laws, military Veterans who are not U.S. citizens can be deported if they are convicted of committing crimes. When these Veterans are deported, one of the biggest challenges they face is access to basic health care for various medical conditions, such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The 31-member Congressional Hispanic Caucus estimates there are about 3,000 cases of Veterans deported to countries around the world, though the U.S. Government does not track them. In response to the increasing number of deported Veterans and concerns expressed by members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, VA established an exam location in Tijuana, Mexico. Veterans are now able to obtain general medical exams, including hearing and mental health exams. Ultimately, the exam results will assist with receiving disability ratings for service-connected conditions. There have been recent reports that Veterans are being deported who have no criminal records. Assuming this trend will continue, VA will need to make this issue a priority in terms of serving the growing needs of deported Veterans. Although VA does not track the number of deported Veterans at this time, it is prudent that such data are tracked so that the issue is properly measured/scoped and appropriate services are readily available as deportations continue.

VA Responses:

VBA Response: Concur in Principle

VA currently provides benefits and services to honorably discharged Veterans, including Veterans who have been deported. Eligible Veterans may submit claims for VA benefits under applicable laws governing the type of benefit sought. VA provides Veterans with assistance needed in gathering the supporting evidence to complete a claim submission, including a disability medical examination, if in order. Although VA did not set up a clinic in Tijuana, Mexico, as indicated in the rationale for this recommendation, VA contracts with Veterans Evaluation Services to perform disability compensation examinations in several international locations, including Mexico. Veterans are not charged for the VA disability examination that is ordered as part of the claim for benefits.

As VA offers the same benefits and services to all honorably discharged Veterans domestic and abroad, VA does not need to develop a comprehensive plan for access to benefits specific to deported Veterans.

VHA Response: Non-Concur

Due to limitations in the current authority for VA to provide payment for health care services for certain eligible Veterans in foreign countries, VA is unable to provide a more comprehensive health care benefit.

All honorably discharged deported Veterans living abroad have access to health care services for their service connected disabilities through the Foreign Medical Program (38 United States Code (U.S.C.) 1724). Based on the law, eligibility requirements for medical services are different for Veterans outside the United States than within the United States. The Foreign Medical Program

assumes payment responsibility for U.S. Veterans only for a VA-rated service-connected disability, or any disability associated with and held to be aggravating a VA-rated, service-connected disability (38 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 17.35). In order to provide a more comprehensive benefit, VA requires legislative change to 38 U.S.C. 1724 to allow for the provision of health care for Veterans' nonservice-connected conditions.

VHA Action Plan: Office of Veterans Access to Care						
Recommendation #1: That the Department of Veterans Affairs proactively develop comprehensive plans to provide access to health care services and benefits for all honorably discharged deported Veterans by June 2019.						
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status as of October 2018	Contact Person
N/A	OCC		Recommendation 1	N/A	Non-Concur	Dr. Susan Kirsh Jereme Whiteman

NCA Response: Concur

NCA Action Plan:						
Recommendation #1:						
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status as of October 2018	Contact Person
Clarify eligibility for VA burial and memorial benefits for honorably discharged deported Veterans	41B	41A, VBA	None	7/31/2018	Honorably discharged deported Veterans remain eligible for VA burial and memorial benefits, unless they committed a Federal or State capital crime or a	Kimberly Wright, Executive Director, NCA Office of Field Programs

					<p>Tier III sex offense that would bar them from VA burial benefits under 38 U.S.C. 2411. Memorials (Headstones, markers, medallions, PMCs, burial flags) can and are provided to eligible, non-barred Veterans worldwide. Burial and plot allowances are the purview of VBA and would need to be addressed under their plan.</p>	
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Recommendation #2: That the Department of Veterans Affairs require the Veterans Benefits Administration to collaborate with the National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics to publish disability award reports bi-annually to identify and address potential racial/ethnic award disparities by the end of FY 2019.

Rationale: During the December 2016 ACMV meeting, former Secretary David Shulkin committed to address this longstanding recommendation due to its importance to the Committee in fulfilling its Congressionally mandated responsibilities. The issue was briefed to the Senior Leadership team at morning report meetings. The Deputy Assistant Secretary for Data Governance and Analytics, confirmed that they now had the capability through data matching to identify Veterans by race and ethnicity and therefore could produce the data that were required. A VBA White Paper was presented to the senior leaders by the Acting VBA Under Secretary, Tom Murphy. Based upon litigation concerns expressed by Mr. Murphy, the issue was referred back to ACMV for reconsideration. ACMV's Chair responded to the Secretary in a letter, dated January 30, 2018, which confirmed that despite VBA's concerns, the Committee is adamant that its longstanding recommendation be implemented. Due to the VA leadership changes, no final decision was communicated back to the Committee as to VBA's plans for providing requested data and reports. Background documentation justifying this recommendation is outlined in the ACMV 2017 Annual Report under Recommendation #1.

VA Response: Concur in Principle

VBA data on race and ethnicity is much more comprehensive than it was 2 years ago; however, significant data quality issues and voids remain. These issues are particularly challenging for Vietnam Era Veterans. A USVETS data file refresh would offer the best near-term action that could improve the completeness of the information and will be explored. Necessary funding will be explored with NCVAS.

VBA will continue to assess the availability of demographic data; however, until we are able to obtain the missing information, we will be unable to produce a statistically valid report.

VBA Action Plan: Recommendation #2:						
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status as of October 2018	Contact Person
Improve the completeness of race/ethnicity data	20B		Explore additional sources of race/ethnicity data to fill in gaps, such as a USVETS update	Complete and ongoing.		Mark Seastrom, Director, 20B

Recommendation #3: That the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration, follows through on its commitment to provide the VHA Office of Health Equity (OHE) necessary personnel resources by the end of FY 2019, to facilitate implementation of the VA Health Equity Action Plan.

Rationale: In December 2016, VHA Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Organizational Excellence assured ACMV that OHE was approved for two additional full-time employees in July 2016 and that OHE's mission had her full support. As of June 2017, no additional staffing resources have been provided. At the time of the drafting of the 2017 Recommendation #2, VHA was completing the classification process to update the position descriptions prior to starting the recruitment action for these positions. However, such actions cannot be initiated since a waiver to allow recruitment under the current hiring process has not been approved.

In the recent 2016 Commission on Care Report Recommendation #5 – Health Care Equity, the Commission recommended: VHA work to eliminate health disparities by establishing health care equity as a strategic priority; VHA provide the OHE adequate resources, level of authority to successfully build culture military competence among all VHA Care Systems providers and employees; and VHA ensures that the Health Equity Action Plan (HEAP) is fully implemented with adequate staffing, resources and support. The lack of additional staff in OHE has hampered the implementation of HEAP.

VA anticipates a smaller, but more diverse Veteran population. VA projects a future overall Veteran population in 2043 being 14.5 million, with minority Veterans being 5.2 million, and women Veterans

being 2.3 million. Minority Veterans currently comprise approximately 33 percent of the women Veteran population. In 2014, 45.6 percent (2 million) minority Veterans were enrolled in VHA with approximately 1.3 million using the system and 16.9 percent of those users being service-connected. Therefore, with an anticipated minority population in 2043 being 5.2 million, if current trends continue, approximately 2.28 million minority Veterans would be enrolled in VA for health care.

The 2017 Report of the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans Recommendation #2 requested that the VHA OHE be provided the necessary staffing by the end of FY 2017 to ensure the successful implementation of HEAP. The Committee is aware of the departure of the Chief Officer, OHE, on May 23, 2018, and understand that a job offer has been made to an applicant who will assume this role possibly in September 2018. However, there is no indication of current recruitment plans for additional OHE staff personnel. It is essential this office be provided adequate resources as soon as possible.

VA Response: Concur

VHA Action Plan: Office of Health Equity						
Recommendation #3:						
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status as of October 2018	Contact Person
Recruit to full OHE complement of 6 full-time equivalent employees (FTE)	OHE		Recruit Executive Director	Complete	Applicant selected (began work July 2018)	Ernest Moy Executive Director, OHE
			Recruit GS-14 Health Systems Specialist	Complete	Position filled Aug 2018	
			Recruit for remaining 3 FTE vacancies	Ongoing *Funding for two positions reduced	OHE planning recruitment strategy	

Recommendation #4: That the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, develop a comprehensive communication plan to encourage minority Veteran participation in the Rapid Appeals Management Process (RAMP) by 2nd Qtr., 2019.

Rationale: Minority Veterans have expressed frustration with their benefits claims appeals. Though Veterans have received letters from the VA inviting them to participate in RAMP, Veterans did not fully understand the process and did not have anyone to contact to discuss or receive information on RAMP. In addition, minority Veterans have reported that some Veterans Service Officers throughout

the country are also unclear about the finer points regarding RAMP and are unable to answer their Veteran client's questions. As a result of such confusion, minority Veterans have been discouraged from participating in RAMP and fewer minority Veterans may be taking advantage of RAMP for fear of "re-starting the clock" on their appeals process. A more effective communication strategy that clearly delineates the RAMP process will ensure minority Veterans take advantage of this process at levels commensurate with all Veterans.

VA Response: Concur in Principle

RAMP is a voluntary option for eligible Veterans to participate in the new appeals process established by the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017 prior to February 2019, the effective date of the law. Initially, RAMP invitations were mailed to eligible Veterans with some of the oldest appeals pending by stage. As of April 2018, the requirement to receive a RAMP invitation from VA has been removed and any Veteran with an eligible appeal may participate in RAMP.

VBA continues to effectuate a comprehensive communication plan through a combination of mediums, to include in-person briefings at national and state Veteran advocacy group conferences, web content and social media presence, national press releases, and blast email communications to Veterans. VBA has worked closely with Congressional stakeholders, Veterans Service Organizations, private attorneys, VA Regional Benefits Office outreach personnel, VBA National Call Center personnel, and influencer groups to communicate RAMP criteria and eligibility requirements to Veterans. Information on Appeals Modernization and RAMP can also be found at <https://benefits.va.gov/benefits/appeals.asp>. As we will continue our outreach efforts for this ongoing initiative as part of normal operations, throughout the RAMP opt-in period which is currently scheduled to expire in February 2019.

Part IV. Agenda - Washington, D.C. Departmental Briefings

**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON MINORITY VETERANS (ACMV)**

December 12 - 14, 2017

VA Central Office

810 Vermont Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20420

AGENDA

Tuesday – December 12, 2017 (VACO Room 230)

8:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.	Opening Remarks & Review Agenda	Ms. Barbara A. Ward, DFO Mr. Lee Rivas, Chairman
8:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.	VA Advisory Committee Management	Mr. Jeffrey Moragne Director, ACMO
9:00 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.	VA Ethics Briefing	Ms. Carol Borden, Staff Attorney, Deputy Ethics Official
9:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.	Center for Minority Veterans	Ms. Barbara Ward, Director Mr. Dennis May, Deputy Director
10:00 a.m. - 10:15 a.m.	Break	
11:00 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.	National Cemetery Administration	Ms. Kimberly Wright Executive Director of Field Programs

Topics:

- Provide an update on the Native American Cemetery Grant Program.
- Provide an update on Outreach Activities targeting minority Veterans.
- Provide an update on NCA' Action Plan, Recommendation #1, pg. 12, 2017 ACMV Annual Report.

11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.	Suicide Prevention	Dr. David Carroll, Executive Director, Office of Mental Health & Suicide Prevention
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Topics:

- Provide the Strategies and statistics on suicide prevention.
- Provide a brief on the Tool Kit.
- Provide a brief and update on the Call Centers/Crisis Line.

11:30 a.m. - 12:45 p.m.	Lunch on Your Own	
12:45 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Prep for Secretary	
1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.	VA Remarks/Photo Op	The Honorable David J. Shulkin Secretary
2:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.	Veterans Experience Office	Dr. Lynda Davis Chief Veterans Experience Officer

Topics:

- Roles & Responsibilities of VEO.
- Brief on the Veterans' Family, Caregiver, and Survivor Advisory Committee.
- Customer Satisfaction Surveys – minority Veterans.

2:30 p.m. - 2:45 p.m.	BREAK	
2:45 p.m. - 3:45 p.m.	Veterans Benefits Administration	Mr. Robert Reynolds Deputy Under Secretary for Disability Assistance

Topics:

- Update on Modernization Efforts.
- Update on the Native American Direct Home Loan Program.
- Update on Outreach Activities to Minority Veterans.
- Provide an update on the Annual Benefits Report by State.
- Brief and provide an update on the PTSD Grant Rate Analysis Report.
- Provide an update on VBA's Action Plan, Recommendation #1, pg. 10, 2017 ACMV Annual Report.
- Provide an update on VBA's Action Plan, Recommendation #4, pg. 20, 2017 ACMV Annual Report.

3:45 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.	Committee After Action Review & Sub-Committee Notes	Mr. Lee Rivas, Chairman
4:45 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Wrap Up	
5:00 p.m.	Adjourn	

**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON MINORITY VETERANS (ACMV)**

December 12 – 14, 2017
VA Central Office
810 Vermont Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20420

AGENDA

Wednesday – December 13, 2017 (VACO Room 230)

8:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.	Opening & Review Agenda	Mr. Lee Rivas, Chairman
8:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.	Board of Veterans Appeals	Ms. Cheryl Mason Deputy Vice Chairman, Board of Veterans Appeals

Topics:

- Provide the status of the Veterans Appeals Improvement & Modernization Act of 2017.

9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	Accountability & Whistleblower Protection	Mr. Peter O'Rourke Executive Director
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Topics:

- Provide an overview of the Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection.
- Provide an informational brief on the new accountability provisions in the Accountability Act, specifically chapters 713 & 714.
- Provide an informational brief on Whistleblower protections, preventing retaliation, and the disclosure submission and resolution process.
- Provide a brief on the Veteran's ID Card Program.
- Provide the latest statistics on terminations, etc.

10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	Choice Program/Community Care	Ms. Kristen Cunningham Executive Officer, Office of Community Care
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Topics:

- Provide a brief and update.

10:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	Mental Health	Dr. David Carroll, Executive Director, Office of Mental Health & Suicide Prevention
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Topics:

- Provide an update on mental health initiatives.

- Provide a brief on Staffing and Recruitment.
- Provide a brief on any trends noted when treating minority Veterans.

11:00 a.m. - 11:15 p.m. Break

11:15 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Veterans Health Administration

Dr. Carolyn Clancy, Acting
Under Secretary for Health

Topics:

- Provide an update on the Modernization efforts.
- Review of current VHA initiatives that focus on access.
- Review of the VA Dental Program.

12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. Lunch on Your Own

1:00 p.m. - 1:45 p.m.

Office of Telehealth

Office of Policy & Planning

Mr. John Peters, Deputy Director
Telehealth Services
Mr. Terry Stinson, Director, Policy
Analysis

Topics:

- Provide an update on current legislation.
- Provide an update on Telehealth/Telemedicine.

1:45 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.

Million Veteran Program

Dr. Jennifer Moser
MVP Program/Office of Research
and Development

Topics:

- Provide an overview and goal of the program.
- Provide an update on the data collection results.

2:15 p.m. - 2:45 p.m.

Women's Health Services

Dr. Patricia Hayes
Chief Consultant, Women's
Health Services

Topics:

- Provide an overview on minority women's health and initiatives.

2:45 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Break

3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Sub-Committee Discussions

Mr. Lee Rivas, Chairman

4:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Wrap Up

4:30 p.m.

Adjourn

**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON MINORITY VETERANS (ACMV)**

December 12 – 14, 2017
VA Central Office
810 Vermont Ave., NW, Washington, D.C.

AGENDA

Thursday – December 14, 2017 (VACO Room 230)

8:00 a.m. - 8:15 a.m.	Opening and Agenda	Mr. Lee Rivas, Chairman
8:15 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.	Office of Diversity & Inclusion	Mr. David Williams Director, Workforce Analysis

Topics:

- Provide a review of minorities in Senior Grades.
- Provide VA Employee Demographics.
- Applicant Flow Analysis.

9:00 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.	Leadership Development Programs	Ms. Lisa Red, MSHA, HCS Acting Director, Healthcare Leadership Talent Institute
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Topics:

- Provide an overview of Leadership Development Programs.

9:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.	Ex-Officios Update	HHS – Dr. Alexis Bakos DOD – Mr. Brett Stevens DOL – Mr. Gordon Burke
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Topics:

- Update on departmental initiatives effecting minority Veterans.

10:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.	Public Comments	Open to the public
10:15 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.	Leadership Exit Briefing	VHA, VBA, & NCA
11:00 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.	Break	
11:15 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	Sub-Committee Meetings	Mr. Lee Rivas, Chairman
12:00 p.m. - 12:45 p.m.	Committee After Action Report	Mr. Lee Rivas, Chairman
12:45 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Wrap Up	

1:00 p.m. Adjourn

Part V. Agenda – St. Louis Site Visit

**Department of Veterans Affairs
Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans
St. Louis, Missouri Site Visit 2018**

AGENDA

Monday, April 16, 2018 Travel Day

Tuesday, April 17, 2018

7:30 a.m.	Assemble in Hotel Lobby/Await Transportation Marriott St. Louis Grand 800 Washington Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63101	
8:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.	Travel to VA St. Louis Health Care System-John Cochran Division Bldg. 2 – Education Wing (Room 141 & 142) 915 North Grand Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63106	
8:30 a.m. - 8:45 a.m.	Meet/Greet VA St. Louis HCS Staff John Cochran Division	VA HCS Lobby
8:45 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.	Opening remarks, Admin. & Prepare for VA St. Louis HCS Briefing	Barbara Ward, DFO Lee Rivas, Chairman
9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	VA St. Louis HCS Briefing	Keith Repko, Director Elizabeth Jenkins, MVPC

Topics:

Outreach to Minority Veterans (MVPC)
Women & Homeless Veterans
Leadership Training Programs
Choice Program/Rural Health Initiatives
Suicide Prevention

11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	VAMC Tour (Tour closed to the Public)	
12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.	Lunch in VA St. Louis HCS Canteen (on your own)	
1:30 p.m. - 1:45 p.m.	Board Bus/Depart for Regional Benefit Office	
1:45 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.	Meet/Greet St. Louis VBA Staff	Building Lobby
2:00 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.	Opening remarks, Admin. & Prepare for St. Louis Regional Benefit Office Briefing	Barbara Ward, DFO Lee Rivas, Chairman
2:15 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.	St. Louis Regional Benefit Office Briefing	Nick Nickens, Asst. Director

Charles F. Prevedel Federal Building
9700 Page Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63106

Natalie Barry, MVPC

Topics:

Outreach Activities to Minority Veterans (MVPC)
Women & Homeless/Incarcerated Veterans
Leadership Training Programs
Intake Sites
Catchment Area Discussion
Claims Processing
Home Loan Program & Transformation Initiatives

3:45 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. Tour of St. Louis Regional Benefit Office (**Tour Closed to the Public**)
4:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. Assemble/Board Bus for Hotel (Marriott St. Louis Grand)

Wednesday, April 18, 2018

7:30 a.m. - 7:45 a.m. Assemble in Hotel Lobby/Board Bus
Marriott St. Louis Grand
800 Washington Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63101

7:45 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. Travel to Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery
Admin Bldg. - Conference Room
2900 Sheridan Road, St. Louis, MO 63125

8:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. Meet/Greet NCA Staff
Admin Bldg. - Conference Room

9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. Jefferson Barracks Nat'l Cemetery Darrell Ryan, Assistant Director
Briefing/Tour Alvin Cochren, MVPC

11:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Assemble/Board Bus to Local Restaurant (St. Louis, Missouri)

11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Lunch (Place TBD)

1:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. Assemble/Board Bus for Town Hall Meeting

1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. Depart for Town Hall Meeting
Harris-Stowe State University (HSSU)
William L. Clay Sr. Early Childhood Center
3026 Laclede Ave., St. Louis, MO. 63103

3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. Prep for Town Hall Meeting

4:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. Town Hall Meeting Barbara Ward, DFO
Harris-Stowe State University (HSSU) Lee Rivas, Chairman
William L. Clay Sr. Early Childhood Center
Professional Development Auditorium-Room 204
3026 Laclede Ave., St. Louis, MO. 63103

6:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. Assemble/Board Bus for Hotel

7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. Return to Hotel (Marriott St. Louis Grand)

Thursday, April 19, 2018

7:30 a.m. – 7:45 a.m. Assemble in Hotel Lobby/Await Transportation
Marriott St. Louis Grand
800 Washington Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63101

7:45 a.m. - 8:15 a.m. Travel to VA St. Louis Health Care System-John Cochran Division
Bldg. 2 – Education Wing (Room 141 & 142)
915 North Grand Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63106

8:15 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. Meet/Greet VA St. Louis Staff VA HCS Lobby
John Cochran Division – Bldg. 2 – Education Wing

8:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. Committee after Action Review & Barbara Ward, DFO
Sub-committee Notes Lee Rivas, Chairman
Prepare for Exit Briefing

10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. Public Comments

10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Conduct **Exit Briefing**
VBA Leadership – Mr. Nick Nickens, Assistant Director
VHA Leadership – Mr. Keith Repko, Director
NCA Leadership – Mr. Darrell Ryan, Assistant Director

12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. Lunch in VA St. Louis HCS Canteen (on your own)

1:00 p.m. - 3:45 p.m. Work on ACMV 2018 Report (1st Draft) Lee Rivas, Chairman

3:45 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. Administrative Paperwork

4:00 p.m. – 4:15 p.m. Adjourn Meeting

4:15 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. Assemble in Lobby/Await Transportation

4:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Return to Hotel (Marriott St. Louis Grand)

Friday, April 20, 2018 Travel Day

Part VI. Town Hall Meeting – St. Louis, Missouri

ACMV hosted a Veterans Town Hall Meeting at the Harris-Stowe State University (HSSU) William L. Clay Sr. Early Childhood Center Professional Development Auditorium. The meeting provided Veterans a forum to share with committee members issues of concern and to obtain answers to questions related to VA benefits and services. There were approximately 53 attendees. Local VA officials from the VA St. Louis Health Care Center (HCS), St. Louis Regional Benefit Office, and the Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery served as panel members during the meeting. Numerous questions were raised regarding: 1) the disability claims process, 2) the available VA programs on addiction and what is VA doing to assist Veterans with addiction, 3) the timeline for adding children – especially special needs children – Reference Dependent Education Benefit and Survivor Benefits, 4) and the Choice Program referral process for medical care. Veterans did not understand RAMP and expressed the difficulties of getting approved for service-connected benefits. The Veterans expressed the need for VA Representatives from VHA, VBA, and NCA do more outreach and widely publicize their outreach events. Also, most Veterans must work during the clinic hours and find it difficult to take off from work to attend appointments and wanted to know if VA is planning to extend or offer services outside of their normal work hours on a limited basis to accommodate these Veterans – maybe 1 day per week. VA officials to provide appropriate follow up on several issues. During the town hall, ACMV heard from Veterans who had great experiences with VA.

Part VII. Exit Briefing with St. Louis Regional Benefit Office, VA St. Louis Health Care System (HCS), and Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery

Nick Nickens, Assistant Director, St. Louis Regional Benefit Office:

- Do not collect race in the application process.
- Some of the data the Committee requests is available at the VACO level but not at their level – but if needed, the regional office can request the data from Headquarters.

Keith Repko, Director, VA St. Louis Health Care System (HCS):

- Conducted 60 outreach events this year and at the town hall, talked to a Veteran about collaborating on additional outreach events.
- Looking at expanding their primary care facilities – putting CBOC's in areas where Veterans are underserved.
- In the future, adding 11 primary care teams.
- Partnering with YMCA's in the metropolitan area – trying to find ways to make it convenient for the Veterans.
- Continuously improving their partnerships with the local media.

Darrell Ryan, Assistant Director, Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery:

- VA must outreach to the Community Leaders – who in turn will connect to their communities.
- We must look at non-traditional methods in putting out media/flyers to inform the Veterans of upcoming events:
 - Target liquor stores – have them put your flyers in the windows.
 - Handing out flyers on the street corners.
- The Legacy Program is in the works here at the Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery – meeting the needs of operating the cemetery comes first.
- The current program is the Director Program – there are only 15 slots. NCA is small and if you pass the program, expect to move.

APPENDIX A: Action Plans Follow Up

Roll Up of Open ACMV Reports Action Plans 2012, 2016, and 2017 Update Spreadsheets

2017 Action Plan Update Spreadsheet
ACMV 2017 Report Action Plan

2017 Action Plan Update Spreadsheet

Report Year	Recommendations	Program Office	Page	Current Status as of October 2018	Projected Completion Date (Date/NA)
2017	Recommendation #1	VBA		Complete	
2017	Recommendation #1	VHA		In Progress	
2017	Recommendation #1	NCA		In Progress	
2017	Recommendation #1	OEI		In Progress	
2017	Recommendation #1	VEO		Closed	8/8/2018
2017	Recommendation #2	VHA		In Progress	
2017	Recommendation #3	VHA		Complete	
2017	Recommendation #4	VBA		In Progress	
2017	Recommendation #4	VHA		In Progress	
2017	Recommendation #4	OPIA		In Progress	

***See Updated Action Plans**

Recommendation #1: That the Department of Veterans Affairs collect and analyze race and ethnicity data across all business lines to identify, monitor, and address potential disparities that effect minority Veterans by the start of FY 2018.

NCA Action Plan:

Recommendation #1:

Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status as of October	Contact Person
1. Revise application forms.	MPS	OMB	1. All forms have already been updated and are with OMB for review.	October 1, 2017	With OMB	Eric Powell, MPS
2. NCA operating systems	MPS		2. All NCA IT systems updated to collect race and ethnicity.	June 2017	Complete	

VBA Response: VBA continues to gather and analyze race and ethnicity data and additional supporting demographic information to determine if potential disparities exist for minority Veterans seeking benefits.

VBA Action Plan: Recommendation #1:						
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status as of October 2018	Contact Person
VBA will reach out to SSA to determine how comprehensive SSA race/ethnicity data is and whether VBA could use such additional data.	20B		Convene a meeting with SSA staff	Complete	SSA only collects race and ethnicity data provided on a voluntary basis when a citizen applies for a social security card or applies for benefits. SSA data will not significantly improve VBA's data completeness.	Mark Seastro m, Director, 20B
VBA will work with NCVAS to determine whether the 2017 Minority Veterans Report data on beneficiaries can be categorized by specific race/ethnicity.	20B		Convene a meeting with NCVAS staff	Complete	Specific race/ethnicity data is still too inaccurate and incomplete to support further decomposition of beneficiary use in the Minority Veterans Report.	Mark Seastro m, Director, 20B
VBA will examine adding voluntary race/ethnicity fields to applications forms.	BAS	20B	Establish a work group	Complete	Members of VBA's leadership held several informal collaborative discussions regarding	Mike Frueh

					<p>the addition of voluntary race/ethnicity fields to applications forms. VBA has determined that modifying applications across all business lines to voluntarily collect race and ethnicity data may not yield the intended results and would be duplicative of information already collected by the Federal Government.</p> <p>VBA's assessment of the available demographic data on race and ethnicity has revealed that missing Veteran data are primarily of the pre-Gulf War era. VBA is working with VADIR and DMDC to obtain more complete data sets. However, voluntary self-reporting of such data does not guarantee that VBA will significantly impact the incomplete data set.</p> <p>A change to the benefits application form, irrespective of necessary IT system changes, would be a lengthy process, to include requirements for OMB approval, and publication to the Federal Registry. Missing data should be made available in</p>
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					<p>VA systems without requiring the Veteran to self-report.</p> <p>Self-reporting this data would be redundant as the data should be available from the Department of Defense. Additionally, self-reporting of sensitive information that is not required for processing claims may cause undue stress and anxiety for the claimant.</p> <p>For these reasons, VBA will not amend existing applications; however, we will continue to assess the available demographic data while searching for ways to mitigate the impact of missing information.</p>
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**Veterans Experience (00VE) Action Plan:
Recommendation #1:**

Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status as of October 2018	Contact Person
1.	VEO	OI&T	<p>VEO collects <i>self-reported</i> race data via service-level (transactional) web-based surveys.</p> <p>Note that because this data is voluntarily self-reported by Veterans (or other survey participants) VEO's ability to identify potential disparities that effect minority Veterans (or</p>	n/a	VEO has added a self-reported race question to the Outpatient Survey,	Anil Tilbe

		<p>other survey participants) is contingent on their willingness to provide this voluntary race information. To the extent that VEO receives such voluntary, self-reported race data, VEO will analyze this data and share with the Center of Minority Veterans.</p> <p>With respect to "address[ing]" potential disparities identified, such action appears to fall outside the scope of VEO's distinct mission. Instead, such action would most appropriately be owned by the specific Administration/line of business providing the service or care.</p>		<p>which has been launched. VEO has also added this question to additional service-level (transactional) web-based surveys.</p>
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VHA Action Plan: Office of Health Equity

Recommendation #1: That the Department of Veterans Affairs collect and analyze race and ethnicity data across all business lines to identify, monitor, and address potential disparities that effect minority Veterans by the start of FY 2018.

Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status as of October 2018	Contact Person
<p>Establish mechanisms to ensure that the collection of race and ethnicity data is standardized and collected in accordance with OMB standards</p> <p>Evaluate the requirement to include collection of race/ethnicity data for all products</p>	Office of Enterprise Integration	All VHA program offices that collect and/or report data	<p>Conduct an organizational assessment to determine current methods used by VHA program offices to collect and report racial/ethnic data.</p> <p>Based on the outcome of the organizational assessment, implement OMB criteria or establish VA/VHA processes as needed.</p> <p>Identify VA and VHA</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Anticipated full implementation of initial actions dependent upon the completion of the Modernization effort</p>	<p>As VHA implements its Modernization Strategy. VHA leadership and the Modernization Team are looking at functions across the Office of Health Equity and the entirety of VHA to determine best organizational fit and suitability for all health care functions. This includes the standardization of data collection, as well as the development of</p>	<p>A key leader will be identified at the VHA level upon the completion of the Modernization Effort</p>

			<p>Leadership need to successfully implement the efforts.</p> <p>Collecting the data that would identify potential disparities remains a key priority for VHA. Specific Program Offices need to analyze the collected data to determine which specific health issues have the greatest impact on the care of minority Veterans.</p> <p>Linkage to the SECVA top five priorities is paramount.</p>		<p>corresponding products and processes as needed.</p>	
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OEI (008B) Action Plan:						
Recommendation #1:						
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status as of October 2018	Contact Person
1	OEI	CMV	Coordinate with CMV to define "further review" requirements to identify which can be satisfied in the annual Profile of Veterans	Nov 2017	Complete	Tamara Lee
2	OEI	CMV	Brief CMV on the annual Profile of Veterans prior to public release	Feb 2018	Complete	Tamara Lee

3	OEI		Publish annual Profile of Veterans	March 2018	Complete	Tamara Lee
4	OEI	CMV	Coordinate with CMV to define" further review" requirements for the next Minority Veteran Report (target publication March 2019)	June 2018	Complete	Tamara Lee
5	OEI	CMV	CMV participates in review(s) of drafts of the Minority Veteran Report (target publication March 2019)	Dec 2018		Tamara Lee
6	OEI		Publish Minority Veteran Report.	March 2019		Tamara Lee

Recommendation #2: That the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration, follows through on its commitment to provide the VHA Office of Health Equity (OHE) necessary personnel resources by the end of FY 2017, to facilitate implementation of the VA Health Equity Action Plan.

VHA (OE) Action Plan: Office of Health Equity

Recommendation #2: That the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration, follows through on its commitment to provide the VHA Office of Health Equity (OHE) necessary personnel resources by the end of FY 2017, to facilitate implementation of the VA Health Equity Action Plan.

Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status as of October 2018	Contact Person
As part of the VHA Modernization plan, complete the review of staffing requirements to effectively support the Health Equity Action Plan. This review should include a comprehensive assessment of which functions should be centralized and which functions should be disbursed	DUSH OE	All VHA Program Office have a proactive role in supporting the HEAP.	VHA Office of OE, OHE, Communications and other sources to continue to promote health equity as a strategic priority. Based on the outcome of the Modernization plan, identify steps required to implement the HEAP on a national level.	Ongoing Implementation underway Finalization dependent upon the completion of the Modernization effort	Action currently in progress as VHA implements its Modernization Strategy VHA Modernization Team is looking at functions across the entire organization to include the Office of Health Equity in efforts to determine best organizational fit and suitability for	A key leader will be determined at the VHA level upon completion of the Modernization Effort.

among field offices or other parts of the organization. All functions need to support and promote organizational consistency.			Activities may include actions such as those described in the Commission on Care Report, for example: designating a leader and health equity clinical champion within each VISN and VAMC.		programmatic support.	
Ensure appropriate level of authority within organization.	Office of the USH with appropriate delegated office support	As above	As part of the Modernization Effort, identify the best organizational structure to underscore Health Equity as a priority. Position the office (or functions) to promote the advancement of health equity for all Veterans.	Ongoing	In August 2016, OHE responded to and concurred with the Commission on Care recommendations regarding needed authorities to implement the HEAP.	VHA Senior Leadership
Reestablish OHE staffing based on the 2011 VHA Health Care Equality Workgroup recommendations.	Office of Health Equity, Organizational Excellence (OE)	Workforce Management and Consulting Office (WMC)	Signed OHE organization chart with additional positions beyond 2 FTEs Recruitment action. OE to review available	Complete May 2017 Complete and ongoing	In July 2016, initial approval to recruit four new FTE, pulled out of the larger OE to support OHE was granted. OHE requested additional administrative conversations	

			<p>resources in January 2017 to see if an additional two FTE are available to complete the proposed staffing model.</p>		<p>with the DUSHOE during the autumn of 2016. These conversations resulted in OHE renegotiating previously approved vacancies. OE granted additional flexibilities and career ladder opportunities. An organizational chart was signed December 2, 2016. In January 2017 the hiring freeze occurred.</p> <p>In May 2017 a waiver request was made to recruit the positions. OHE finalized the development of the position descriptions.</p> <p>Recruitment.</p> <p>The OHE has been approved for six permanent FTE. The hiring freeze, as well as the VHA Modernization</p>	
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					<p>Efforts has significantly changed anticipated administrative actions from 2016.</p> <p>Pending organizational approval to recruit and the completion of the VHA Modernization Effort, which promotes a shared services support model, a more realistic analysis of OHE staffing needs may occur if needed.</p>
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Recommendation #3: That the Department of Veterans Affairs publish an update to the 2015 Health Services Research and Development (HSR&D) Report entitled *Evidence Brief: Update on Prevalence of and Interventions to Reduce Racial and Ethnic Disparities within the VA* to demonstrate the progress made to address the identified issues that impact minority Veterans by the end of FY 2018.

VHA (HSRD) Action Plan: Office of Research and Development

Recommendation #3: That the Department of Veterans Affairs publish an update to the 2015 Health Services Research and Development (HSR&D) Report entitled *Evidence Brief: Update on Prevalence of and Interventions to Reduce Racial and Ethnic Disparities within the VA* to demonstrate the progress made to address the identified issues that impact minority Veterans by the end of FY 2018.

Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status as of October 2018	Contact Person
Publication of report in Medical Care	10P and 10E	HSRD	Complete evidence review report for VA leadership	Complete	The results of the Evidence Map were presented at an HSR&D Equity meeting, and these results were included in a special issue of Medical Care. https://journals.lww.com/lww-	Associate Director, Evidence-based

	<p>QUERI Evidence -based Synthesis Program</p>		<p>Publish peer- reviewed article based on evidence review</p>	<p>medicalcare/toc/2017/09001 September 2017.</p> <p>The ESP described in the citation below did a more limited update in March 2018 published in the American Journal of Public Health (AJPH) https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/pdfplus/10.2105/AJPH.2017.304246.</p> <p>The two ESP reports are available on the VA Intranet: Evidence Review: Social Determinants of Health for Veterans https://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/publications/esp/socialdeterminants.cfm and Evidence Map: Prevalence of and Interventions to Reduce Health Disparities https://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/publications/esp/DisparitiesInterventions.cfm</p>	<p>Synthesi Program</p>
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Recommendation #4: That the Department of Veterans Affairs ensure that the Spanish language versions of the instructions for applications for VA benefits and services are readily available, especially in areas of the country with high Latino/Hispanic populations, to assist Veterans and their family members seeking VA benefits and services.

VBA Action Plan: Recommendation #4:							
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status as of October 2018	Contact Person	

<p>Translate Web pages to Spanish</p>	<p>BAS</p>	<p>OPIA</p>	<p>Provide webpage access to Translation Services contractors</p>	<p>In Progress</p>	<p>In Progress (San Juan, Houston, and Waco webpages are now available in Spanish. Additional pages are being completed as resources allow.)</p>	<p>Mike Frueh, Executive Director, Benefits Assistance Service</p>
<p>Update the TAP program to accommodate Spanish speaking participants</p>			<p>Complete redesign of TAP program; assign Participant User Guide to Translation Services</p>	<p>Complete</p>	<p>TAP materials (Participant Guide and Benefits I and II Briefing Decks) were completed in December of 2017.</p>	
<p>Update the VA Federal Benefit Booklet for Veterans, Dependents, and Survivors</p>			<p>BAS will work with OPIA to update the Spanish version of the Federal Benefit Booklet.</p>	<p>In Progress</p>	<p>TAP materials have now been changed. The new curriculum materials will be translated as soon as possible.</p>	
				<p>Complete</p>	<p>The benefits book was translated and provided to OPIA in a Section 508 compliant PDF on 12/12/17.</p>	

OPIA Response: Concur

VHA Action Plan: Office of Health Equity

Recommendation #4: That the Department of Veterans Affairs ensure that the Spanish language versions of the instructions for applications for VA benefits and services are readily available, especially in areas of the country with high Latino/Hispanic populations, to assist Veterans and their family members seeking VA benefits and services.

Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status as of October 2018	Contact Person
<p>Assess existing resources for ESL Veterans and their families across VHA.</p> <p>Develop plan to remediate existing gaps. Ensure quality of existing materials.</p> <p>Develop new resources based on identified gaps.</p>	<p>Office of Policy and Services (10P).</p> <p>Recommend that this particular task be managed at the VA level, as it crosses all administrations to ensure consistency across the Agency.</p> <p>There will be a need for Senior representation for each administration to ensure ongoing emphasis on its importance.</p>	<p>All VHA program offices that collect and/or report data.</p>	<p>Identify stakeholders (i.e. Veterans Health Library, Connected Care, Community Care, Policy and Planning, Advocacy, et al) for collaboration internally and externally.</p> <p>Engage Vets.Gov and the VSOs.</p> <p>Survey existing materials both print and electronic, to identify current resources and perform a concurrent gap analysis.</p>	<p>To be established by identified lead office</p>	<p>This area needs continued enhancement.</p> <p>There were initial conversations with the Health Equity Advisory Coalition; however, it was determined that this is not a Health Equity issue in its entirety.</p>	<p>Suggest a conversation at the USH/PDUSH and DUSH levels to determine an appropriate office to lead the VHA portion of a combined response.</p> <p>The Office of Population Health might be considered as a strong candidate to fill this role.</p>

2016 Action Plan Update Spreadsheet
ACMV 2016 Report Action Plan

2016 Action Plan Update Spreadsheet

Report Year	Recommendations	Program Office	Page	Status	Projected Completion Date (Date/NA)
2016	Recommendation #1	VBA		Non-concur	See Response to 2017 Annual Report Recommendation #1.
2016	Recommendation #1	OPP/OEI		In Progress	See Response to 2017 Annual Report Recommendation #1.
2016	*Recommendation #2	VHA		In Progress	See 2018 Annual Report Recommendation #3.
2016	Recommendation #3	NCA		Complete	June 1, 2018

*See Updated Action Plans

Recommendation #1: That the Department of Veterans Affairs executes a contract to publish a report which reflects current utilization of VA benefits and services, and disability compensation awards by race, ethnicity, and gender by the end of FY 2017.

Recommendation #2: That the VHA Office of Health Equity (OHE) be restored to its original eight Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staffing level by the end of CY 2016.

VHA (OE) Action Plan: Office of Health Equity						
Recommendation #2: That the VHA Office of Health Equity (OHE) be restored to its original eight Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staffing level by the end of Calendar Year 2016.						
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status as of October 2018	Contact Person
Resource approval for an additional 4 FTEs. Human Resources to work with the Office of Health Equity in the development of position descriptions and	Office of Organizational Excellence (10E)	Office of Health Equity (10EB) Workforce Management and Consulting Office – VSHO, Human Resources	Obtain resource approval for 4 additional FTEs Begin process to recruit (develop position descriptions, et. al.)	At the direction of the Office of Health Equity	OHE is approved for 6 FTE on its organizational chart. At present, two positions are filled and a third is authorized for recruitment. Authorization for the three	Brenda Faas

recruiting efforts with additional administrative support from the Office of Organizational Excellence.			Office of Organizational Excellence (10E) to review available resources again in January 2017 to see if an additional two FTE are available to complete the proposed staffing model. An additional two vacancies are not available at this time.		remaining vacancies, and approval to increase from 6 FTE to 8 FTE is pending VHA's decisions on its' Modernization.	
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Recommendation #3: That the National Cemetery Administration implements a targeted burial benefits outreach program to eligible spouses, and dependent children of Veterans to increase their awareness of their eligibility for burial benefits by the end of FY 2017.

NCA Action Plan:						
Recommendation #3						
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status as of July 2017	Contact Person
NCA will continuously endeavor to foster relationships with various outreach programs, as well as, identify new outreach avenues in an effort to share information and increase awareness of the burial benefits available to Veterans, eligible spouse, and dependent children of Veterans. In doing so, we will	Communications and Outreach Support (43A2)	N/A.	Communication plan and products	Complete	Closed.	Bea Bernfeld.

<p>continue to introduce and encourage those eligible to consider our Pre-Need Burial Eligibility Determination Program which encourages advance planning for a Veteran or Veteran loved-one's final resting place. We have been aggressive in our efforts to market this program, as it can potentially reduce stress on families during a difficult time of loss and grief.</p>						
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2012 Action Plan Update Spreadsheet
ACMV 2012 Report Action Plan

2012 Action Plan Update Spreadsheet

Report Year	Recommendations	Program Office	Page	Current Status as of October 2018	Projected Completion Date (Date/NA)
2011	Recommendation #13	CMV		In Progress	Submission with FY 2020 Budget (OCLA confirmed – 8/2/2018)

***See Updated Action Plans**

Recommendation #13: The Center for Minority Veterans submitted a request to the VA Legislative Review Panel (LRP) to have the ACMV Report changed from an annual to a biennial report. The proposal was identified in this review cycle by a designation of: 00M-1, NEW, Requirement for Biennial Report on Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans.

Prior Response: Originally in the ACMV 2011 Report Action Plan (as of September 2011) and was approved in 2012. The VA and OMB both approved – will be submitted with the 2018 Budget.

APPENDIX B: Advisory Committee Biographies

Nyamekye C. Anderson African American

Nyamekye Anderson is currently a Federal Agent with the Department of Energy. He is also the Founder/Executive Director of the Veterans and Community Global, Inc. He is responsible for the overall strategic and operational management of the Veterans and Community Global, Inc. staff, programs, expansion, and execution of this nonprofit's mission.

Mr. Anderson served in the Marine Corps from 1995-2003. He served in combat tours and participated in the Platoon Direct Action Raid on Safwan Hill, Iraq on March 21, 2003. He received numerous medals to include: Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, and Humanitarian Service Medal.

Mr. Anderson is an active member of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) and is a Veterans Advocacy Committee Member at the VA Medical Center in Albuquerque, NM. He is also the President of the Veterans and Families of Central New Mexico Club at the Central New Mexico Community College.

Mr. Anderson has a Bachelor in Aviation and a Master's in Business Administration. He currently resides in Albuquerque, NM.

Phillip L. Billy American Indian

Phillip L. Billy is the Director of the Chickasaw Nation Veterans Services. He previously served as director of the Chickasaw Nation Purcell Area Office, Social Services. Phillip's passion is serving people to help them improve their quality of life and strengthening their community and the world.

Mr. Billy has collaborated with Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs to serve Chickasaw Veterans and families, and is currently working to get his team accredited as Veterans Service Officers. He oversees the services to be provided at the new 15,000sq.ft. Veterans Lodge that is in the final stages of construction. He has worked with the architect and design firms to ensure the Veterans and their families are top priority in the design and furnishing of the lodge. Once completed, the lodge will have two wings, one for services, and the other for Veterans to enjoy the camaraderie of other Veterans in a comfortable environment. The lodge will provide cultural components to its services.

Mr. Billy is a Veteran of the U.S. Air Force. He reflects back to when he completed his 4-year enlistment as a Sergeant and returned to very rural southeast Oklahoma. He did not realize the benefits and services he had earned for proudly serving his country. He sees many native and non-native Veterans, including family members who have had the same experience. This drives his desire to ensure all Veterans have the opportunities they have earned.

He received his Bachelors of Social Work and Masters of Human Relations from the University of Oklahoma. Phillip is married to his wife of 25 years, Lisa Johnson-Billy, and they have two sons, Masheli, Nahinli, and daughter, Anoli. His sons are currently serving in the Army and his daughter is

in high school with aspirations of attending one of the military academies. He currently resides in Payne, OK.

Melissa Castillo
Hispanic

Melissa Castillo, Veterans Service Officer at the Dallas County Veterans Service Office in Dallas, TX, was born and raised in Laredo, TX, until age 10 when her family moved to Converse, TX.

Ms. Castillo enlisted in the Navy in 1994 and separated from active duty in 1996 with an honorable discharge. From 2003-2007, she served in the Navy Reserve. She completed basic training and Torpedoman's Mate "A" School at the Naval Air Station, Orlando, FL. Her duty station included on board the USS Simon Lake (AS-33) in La Maddalena, Sardinia, Italy; Naval Submarine Base, New London, CT; and Naval Operational Support Center, San Antonio, TX.

Ms. Castillo is an accredited Veterans Service Officer and has assisted many Veterans, surviving spouses, and dependents in acquiring benefits with the Department of Veterans Affairs for over 9 years. She is currently the Treasurer of the Veterans County Service Officer Association of Texas, member of the Greater Dallas Veterans Council, and member of the Dallas County Aggie Mom Club. She also served as the Assistant Regional Director for San Antonio Region, Veterans County Service Officer Association of Texas; as the Assistant Women Veterans Coordinator; as Veteran's Liaison for Congressman Ciro Rodriquez to coordinate with office staff in assisting Veterans and surviving spouse's in applying for DAV benefits; Veterans Liaison for VITAS Innovative Hospice Care; Liaison to the Gold Star Families in Bexar County; Advisor to the US Army Survivor Outreach Services Program, and Advisor to the Alamo Community College District Veterans Affairs Committee.

Ms. Castillo has received many awards and recognition which included: Appreciation Award Plaque for Outreach Service from Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 837; Outstanding Officer of the Year Award 2011-2012 from the Veterans County Service Officer Association of Texas; Appreciation Plaque for Outreach Services from Veterans of Foreign Wars from Harlandale Memorial Post 4815; Certificate of Honor from the Veterans County Service Officers Association of Texas; Certificate of Recognition and Honor from Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 76; and Certificate of Appreciation from Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 9603.

Ms. Castillo graduated from Judson High School in Converse, Texas. She graduated from Our Lady of the Lake University with a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work and is currently prospecting graduate schools to further her education while working full-time.

Robert V. "Bobby" McDonald
African American

Bobby McDonald is president and executive director of the Black Chamber of Commerce of Orange County, and he is leading the organization into its 30th year. Under his leadership, the Black Chamber of Commerce of Orange County has partnered consistently with minority business associations, local chambers and legislators to provide support and advocate for the county's many small-business owners.

Mr. McDonald developed the chamber's educational outreach programs and has established the chamber's Veteran's business network programs. Through a partnership with Explorer Studios, two award winning educational films have been produced: "Building the Dream" and "History of the

Buffalo Soldiers." McDonald is now a member of the PBS So Cal Board of Trustees where he has assisted with historic African American PBS presentations such as "The March at 50" and "African Americans, Many Rivers to Cross".

His many honors include the Human Relations Leadership Award (from the Orange County Human Relations Commission), being named the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Millennial Man of the Year by COR AME Church, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc. International Alumni Brother of the Year in 1999, and Distinguished Alumnus Award from Cal State Fullerton. He has been president of the CSUF Alumni Association, president of the CSU Statewide Alumni Council, recognized as one of CSU's Statewide Outstanding African American Alumni, and one of Cal State Fullerton's 50th Anniversary prominent alums. LA Harbor College, for their 60th Anniversary, bestowed their prestigious Outstanding Community Leader, their Alumnus of the Year award and inducted McDonald into their Athletic Hall of Fame.

McDonald is a U.S. Navy Vietnam Veteran, serving 4 years and separating as an Aviation Boatswain's Mate Aircraft Handler Petty Officer 3rd Class. He is also a member of the 9th and 10th (Horse) Calvary Association-Buffalo Soldiers, a former Student Body President at Los Angeles Harbor College and he served as a governor's appointee to the California Cultural Historical Endowment Board and the 17-member State Board of Governors of the California Community College System where he created and chaired the Board's Veteran's Affairs Committee. He was recently re-appointed to the Orange County Veterans Advisory Council, where he is now chair of the council. Mr. McDonald resides in Anaheim, CA.

Ginger Miller African American

Ginger Miller is a native New Yorker and former homeless service disabled Veteran. She served in the Navy from 1989 to 1992. After taking care of her husband, a disabled Veteran who has suffered from PTSD for over a decade and experiencing homelessness with her family, she became Founder and CEO of two nonprofit organizations that serves Veterans and their families: John 14:2, Inc. and Women Veterans Interactive.

Ms. Miller's advocacy and outreach efforts have led her to host Veteran Round Tables with state Veterans agencies and elected representatives. She facilitates workshops for Veteran caregivers and frequently receives invitations to speak at various government agencies. She has served on numerous boards: Chairwoman of the Prince George's County Veterans Commission; Commissioner Maryland Commission for Women; Member of the Maryland Veterans Resilience Advisory Council; Maryland Minority Business Economic Advisory Committee; and a Member of the Maryland Caregivers Support Coordinating Council. She is currently a member of Disabled American Veteran (DAV). She was recognized by the White House as a 2013 Champion of Change for Women Veterans.

Ms. Miller received a Bachelor's Degree in Accounting from Hofstra University in Hempstead, NY, and is currently pursuing a Masters in Nonprofit Management and her MBA at the University of Maryland University College.

****Librado M. Rivas, Command Sergeant Major, USA (Retired)
Hispanic**

Command Sergeant Major Rivas retired with over 25 years of total U.S. Army service. Mr. Rivas has over 42 years of combined U.S. Army and Government service. As a Command Sergeant Major, Mr. Rivas served at the Brigade and Battalion level. As a Government civilian, Mr. Rivas served in the Pentagon, as a senior GS-15, leading Army-wide programs in Lean Six Sigma, Force Structure, Systems Analyses, and Permanent Change of Station.

Mr. Rivas serves as a life-time member in the American GI Forum, American Legion, Disabled American Veterans and Veterans of Foreign Wars. In the American GI Forum, Mr. Rivas has served as National Vice-Commander, National Treasurer, National Secretary, National Liaison Officer-Washington, DC and State Commander. In these capacities, he provides leadership, direction and recommendations to the VA and VSOs to ensure Veterans are provided the entitlement and benefits we have all earned by our service to our country. As a Post Service Officer with VFW 76, San Antonio, TX, Mr. Rivas also works with Veterans to provide assistance and keep them informed of their entitlements and benefits offered by VA, Federal, state and local agencies.

Mr. Rivas's last Federal position was at the Pentagon serving as Director, Army Lean Six Sigma (LSS) Program. He provided leadership and direction for the Army-wide program focused on continuous process improvement. He served as the LSS Principal Advisor to general officers who are the stewards of our nation's military resources. Mr. Rivas ensured that the Lean Six Sigma Program continued to be an essential element to drive performance excellence to reducing inefficiencies and cost and enabling informed decision making.

Mr. Rivas holds a Master's of Science in Administration from Central Michigan University and a Bachelor's of Science in Business Administration from the University of Maryland.

Mr. Rivas is a native of Sinton, TX, and the father of two - Lee, Jr. and Susan.

**Raul E. Rosas, Petty Officer First Class, USN (Retired)
Puerto Rican**

Raul is the Founder and Executive Director of LIFT A VET (a Maryland-Puerto Rico nonprofit assisting Veterans). He serves as a Commissioner with the Maryland Veterans Commission, a Governor appointed position, advising the Maryland VA Secretary on issues impacting Iraq/Afghanistan Veterans and advises on the development of initiatives and strategies to further the Maryland VA outreach, advocacy, and awareness to the over 450,000 Veterans residing in Maryland. Raul has over 10 years in the private sector and is currently a Senior Cyber Security Professional supporting U.S. Department of Defense and other Federal Agencies with Northrop Grumman Corporation.

Mr. Rosas' mission is to advocate for the needs and benefits of Veterans living in the United States, Puerto Rico, and abroad delivering wheelchairs and other services where needed. He has established a consortium of professionals to propose revitalizing the former Roosevelt Roads Naval Station in Puerto Rico with the goal of creating new and much-needed jobs for Veterans and local communities in Puerto Rico.

Raul has attended the University of Maryland (Cyber Security), Hillsborough Community College in Tampa, FL (Networking), Howard Community College MD (Computer Forensics) and the University of Notre Dame, Mendoza College of Business (Nonprofit Management Program). Raul E. Rosas is a native of Bayamon, Puerto Rico and a graduate of Cacique Agüeybana High School. He retired from the U.S. Navy as a Petty Officer First Class, with 20 years and is a service-disabled, combat-zone Veteran and a Veteran of Operation Ernest Will and Iraq War (OEF/OIF). He is a resident of Columbia, Maryland.

Ghulam H. Sangi
Asian American

Ghulam Sangi is currently President/CEO of Saharo Foundation, a Maryland-based 501© (3) Nonprofit Corporation. He enlisted in the Army in 2000 and served three combat tours in Kuwait and Afghanistan. He received numerous campaign medals to include: a Bronze Star, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, and Global War on Terrorism Service Medal.

Mr. Sangi started the first and chaired the American Veterans Affinity Network at the Office of Director National Intelligence. He assisted with the development of policies and programs to attract, retain and promote a diverse workforce for the entire Intelligence Community (IC). He served as a consultant to the Director of EEO ODNI on issues related to EEO and diversity with a specific focus on Veterans. He represented thousands of Veterans across IC.

Mr. Sangi is a member of the American Legion and Disabled American Veterans (DAV). He has a Master's of Business Administration in Management from Strayer University, Maryland, and a Bachelor of Science in Engineering from Mehran University, Pakistan.

Mr. Sangi was a recipient of the Senior Executive Fellows Program and Emerging Leaders Program at the Harvard Kennedy School, Cambridge, MA. He also received a Certificate in Executive Leadership from Cornell University, NY. He currently resides Ellicott City, Maryland.

Larry M. Townsend
American Indian

Larry Townsend is an enrolled member of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina and a volunteer Tribal Veterans Service Officer for the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina. He is a Vietnam Veteran, having served honorably in Vietnam in 1969. While in the Army, he attained the rank of SP5 in Vietnam and earned the Bronze Star Medal. He is also currently serving his second term on the Lumbee Tribal Council.

Mr. Townsend currently serves as the East Region Commander for the National American Indian Veterans, Inc. He was re-elected to serve another two-year term as the Southeast Region Vice President to the Executive Board of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI). He also serves as co-chair of the Veterans Committee for NCAI in which he has served in this capacity for over 8 years.

Mr. Townsend is a life member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Disabled American Veterans, Vietnam Veterans of America, and a member of the American Legion. Mr. Townsend is a Graduate FELLOW of the North Carolina Institute of Political Leadership, spring of 1989. He was a past 8-year member of the North Carolina Commission on Indian Affairs. He has a BA Degree in Justice and

Public Policy with a concentration in Politics from North Carolina Wesleyan College. Also, he has two Associate Degrees.

Mr. Townsend currently resides in Pembroke, North Carolina and married to Dr. Rose Marie Lowry-Townsend. He loves to read, has a passion for politics and assisting Veterans, and loves to play golf.

Maria B. VAA-Igafo
Pacific Islander

Maria VAA-Igafo currently works as the Sua District County Chief, for the American Samoa Government, Department of Samoan Affairs in Pago Pago, American Samoa. She is responsible for the welfare and good order of the people within the Sua District and supervises 7 village Mayors.

Ms. VAA-Igafo's military career consisted of over 30 years of service in the Army with a combination of both active and reserve before retiring. She received numerous service medals to include: Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Army Reserve Components Achievement Medal, National Defense Service Medal, and Global War on Terrorism.

Ms. VAA-Igafo is currently the VFW Service Officer for American Samoa, Hawaii State Post Judge Advocate, and the Assistant Disability Service Officer. Since there is limited access and assistance due to the American Samoa being a remote location, she volunteers her time on several outreach programs to assist Veterans in American Samoa and in other neighboring Islands with their benefits entitlements.

Ms. VAA-Igafo currently resides in Pago Pago, American Samoa.

Fang A. Wong
Asian American

Fang A. Wong was born in Canton, China, immigrated to the United States in 1960 at the age of 12 and has been a naturalized citizen since 1963. He joined the Army in 1969 and served 25 months in Vietnam. He also served tours in Germany, Korea and at several stateside bases. His military decorations included the Bronze Star, numerous Meritorious Service Medals, Republic of Vietnam Service Medal, and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal. He retired after 20 years of service.

After retirement, Mr. Wong joined the American Legion, Lt. B.R. Kimlau Chinese Memorial Post #1291 and has been a member for 26 years. He has held many positions at the Post, County, District levels throughout the years and was elected Commander of the Department of New York American Legion. From 2011-2012, he was elected as the American Legion National Commander.

Mr. Wong has served on several committees and commissions in various positions. He was a member of the Department of Labor's Advisory Committee on Veterans Employment, Training, and Employer Outreach (ACVETEO) from 2006-2009.

Mr. Wong was inducted into the New York State Senate Veterans' Hall of Fame in 2012. He currently resides in East Brunswick, NJ, with his wife Barbara Lam, of 40 years, and son, Eric.

**Glenda Wrenn Gordon, MD, MSHP, FAPA
African American**

Glenda Wrenn Gordon, MD, MSHP, FAPA is a board-certified psychiatrist and Director of the Kennedy-Satcher Center for Mental Health Equity at the Morehouse School of Medicine where she is also an Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences.

A 1999 West Point graduate (recipient of the Distinguished Cadet Award), Dr. Wrenn survived a near-fatal car accident while a cadet, which left her with permanent disabilities and foreshortened her military career. Her commitment to a lifetime of service to the nation has since been actualized through her community service and professional work.

Currently, she works clinically with women Veterans at the Women's Center of Excellence for Specialty Care Education at the Atlanta VA. She is involved with many efforts that benefit Veterans including promoting military cultural competence among health care providers, and developing integrated systems of care that address mental health and physical health. She currently resides in Decatur, Georgia, with her husband and three children.

**** Chairman**

Department of Veterans Affairs
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